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Ministry of Attorney General
Ministry of Children and Family Development

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES STRENGTHEN CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

VICTORIA – Legislative changes introduced today strengthen the provincial child welfare system by increasing accountability and enabling proactive public reporting.

Attorney General Wally Oppal introduced the Child and Youth Statutes (Representation Improvement) Amendment Act, 2007, to address outstanding recommendations in the April 2006 Hughes review of B.C.'s child welfare system.

The bill completes the establishment of directors' reviews in the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA). Reviews are a long-established quality assurance mechanism for child welfare practice, as acknowledged by Hughes. However, he recommended they be set out in legislation that includes public accountability as one of the purposes of a review as well as the power to produce a report. These amendments – coupled with the spring 2006 amendments – deliver on that recommendation.

Hughes also made several recommendations for disclosure of information from reviews to the extent necessary for public accountability while respecting privacy. The bill responds to those recommendations by authorizing public release of those parts of a final report – usually the summary and recommendations – that would not violate personal privacy.

Other provisions in today's bill clarify the powers and authority of the Representative for Children and Youth, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. The bill confirms the representative has jurisdiction over delegated agencies such as those providing services to Aboriginal children and youth. Amendments balance the representative's obligation to report publicly on investigations into child critical injuries and deaths with the need to protect personal privacy of children, youth and their families.

The amendments ensure continuity in the transfer of records during the transition to the representative from the former child and youth officer and extend the timing for submission of the representative's service plan. They also clarify the excluded status of the representative's staff.

The new amendments will make clear the obligation to prepare a report on every review conducted and the new provisions will authorize the disclosure of information to conduct a review and to release the final report.

Children and Family Development Minister Tom Christensen noted that the introduction of the new amendments completes the ministry's response to Hughes' recommendations for legislative amendments to the CFCSA.

The legislation was introduced today under the bill, Child and Youth Statutes (Representation Improvement) Amendment Act, 2007.

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